

Board 10
 East Deals
 Both Vul

Trouble -- Problem



♠ J 9 8 7 3
 ♥ 3
 ♦ A Q 3
 ♣ A K 5 2

West	North	East	South
		<i>Pete</i>	
		1 ♠	Pass
1 NT ¹	2 ♥	?	

1. Forcing, usually 5-11 HCP.

Take my seat in a Swiss Team event in Westwood. What would you do? What do experts play in this situation?

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Trouble -- Solution

♠ A 6 2		♠ J 9 8 7 3									
♥ A Q J 5 2		♥ 3									
♦ 7 2		♦ A Q 3									
♣ 10 7 3		♣ A K 5 2									
♠ Q 4	<table border="1" style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 40px; height: 40px; margin: auto;"> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">N</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="text-align: center;">W</td><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">E</td></tr> <tr><td></td><td style="text-align: center;">S</td><td></td></tr> </table>		N		W		E		S		♠ K 10 5
	N										
W		E									
	S										
♥ K 10 7 4		♥ 9 8 6									
♦ K J 10 8 6		♦ 9 5 4									
♣ Q 9		♣ J 8 6 4									

W 3N; EW 3♠; EW 4♦; E 2N; W 3♣; E 2♣; EW 1♥; Par -600

West	North	East	South
		<i>Pete</i>	
		1 ♠	Pass
1 NT ¹	2 ♥	All pass	

1. Forcing, usually 5-11 HCP.

2 ♥ by North

Down 2 — NS -200

The choices are Pass, Double and 3♣. The last is off the charts - partner will expect five cards for 3♣; should he go back to spades on a doubleton, you are likely to get doubled. So Pass and Double are the viable options.

Partner and I had played the day before, after a lengthy hiatus. Both of us privately thought that double by either of us would be treated by the other as penalty. Accordingly, I passed. Partner was fearful of doubling them into game. Despite all those points, he passed as well. At the other table, the opponents bid and made 3 NT, so we lost 9 IMPs on the board. We would have been OK (lose 3) if we had doubled, and would have pushed the board by bidding and making 3 NT. Of course, going down in 3 NT would have been worse.

When 3 NT is played by West, North must not lead a heart, or declarer gets the ninth trick. A spade lead blows up that suit, and hearts cannot be run. The only chance to set the contract is to lead a minor suit and hope that declarer misguesses spades (defense gets three spades and two hearts). This great defense is unlikely.

Multiple national champion Adam Grossack told me he plays a double at my second turn as takeout. With this agreement in place, I would indeed double (great shape and 14 HCP). Partner would either convert for penalties or make a move toward game.

The flip side of this, as with negative doubles, is that partner's double would also be takeout. So if I had hearts behind the overcaller, I would pass, and hope partner would reopen with a double.

Conclusion: This is a low-level competitive auction where our relative strength and fit is largely unknown. Experts play doubles as takeout. On the other hand, we would have been OK, had West acted over 2♥, so this is not a strong endorsement of the expert method. As usual, understanding your system is most important.